

Soviet Strength

and



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Soviet Strategy

by

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Soviet Strength and Soviet Strategy « «

GERMAN Fascism has declared war on the Soviet Union. Hitler's panzer divisions, after having mopped up most of Europe, have been unleashed against the Red Army. The blitzkrieg, so far unanswered, has turned to the east.

Most commentators have generously granted the Soviets from three to six weeks. Others have said that it will be a long and bloody war but that in the end a German victory is inevitable.

It is in the conviction that both sets of commentators are, perhaps wishfully, ignoring certain basic facts that the following analysis is attempted.

A realistic view of the German-Soviet War must take into consideration the following points: 1) the mechanized army is an invention of the Soviet Union, picked up and elaborated upon by German Fascism. 2) The strategy of the blitzkrieg is based essentially on the supposition that its force will be opposed to a conventional mass army. 3) the blitzkrieg, when opposed by a mechanized force, loses its logic. 4) The ordinary type of line fortifications are useless against the concentrated blows of a mechanized army. 5) The Soviet Union realized this as long ago as 1932, and proceeded to build a new type of defense, designed especially to absorb the blitzkrieg.

The long range strategy of the Soviet armed forces is: (a) to blunt the force of the blitzkrieg by opposing to it equally mechanized forces; (b) to absorb the momentum of the blitzkrieg in the carefully prepared depth defense zone; and (c) to counter with a mechanized attack at such time as the panzer divisions have been immobilized and the German effective reduced to the status of a mass army.

THE NATURE OF THE BLITZKRIEG

WHAT IS A BLITZKRIEG? A blitzkrieg is what its name indicates. It's a lightning war. It is organized primarily upon the basis of time. Therefore, blitz.

It is organized in point of time by reason of the fact that it is fought primarily with mechanized troops. Mechanized troops can move faster than troops that are not mechanized.

The French, English and American offensive in the fall of 1918, the final offensive which brought about the consummation of the World War, moved forward at the rate of a mile and a half a day.

But in the Second World War, the German panzer divisions in Poland occupied territory at the rate of 12 miles a day; in the break through at Sedan, at the rate of 14 miles a day; and in the drive from Abbeville, to Rouen, at the rate of 30 miles a day. In the Balkans, the territory between Athens and the base of operations in Bulgaria was occupied in exactly three weeks, or an average rate of 18 miles per day. Thus, the difference in the rate of occupation of territory is due strictly to mechanization.

In dealing with the manner by means of which a blitzkrieg is fought, we'll have to turn our attention then, to the mechanized or panzer divisions which form the core of the modern army. They do not form the entire army, but only the core of it.

A PANZER DIVISION, or a mechanized German division is made up of the following material: 48 heavy tanks, 84 medium tanks, 252 light tanks, 232 troop carriers for use with armored troops, 96 units of mobile artillery, 27 Stuka bombers, 258 armored motorcycles, 1,000 service cars, 4 battalions of motorized infantry, engineers, and signalers, and about 12,000 troops. This is the material which goes into a panzer division.

The second factor in a blitzkrieg is the semi-autonomous nature of the panzer divisions themselves. The panzer divisions are often far out in advance of the mass infantry. They move rapidly and make no attempt to wait for the mass infantry to catch up with them. For that reason, it's necessary for them to have a certain amount of autonomy in tactical procedure.

They are often merely given their strategic objective and then left to work out their own tactical procedure in terms of local conditions. The panzer division itself is really a small army. It is made up of infantry, artillery, tanks, machine gun corps, engineers, and aviation. Therefore it is in a real sense an army in miniature.

The third factor in the structure of a blitzkrieg is men and morale. The men who make up a panzer division are mechanically well-

trained and have had a long period of military service. The bulk of the men in a panzer division should have about nine years of training. Their morale must be high because these men often manoeuvre where contact with either line officers or staff officers is impossible. They must be capable of originating and carrying out minor decisions. For that reason, the men in a panzer division, all of them, have been given by their trainers, the position and status of non-commissioned officers. They are not treated and do not have the status of privates in an infantry regiment. This results in a section of units capable of a tremendous amount of individual action.

The fourth part of a blitzkrieg is a unit outside the panzer division. It's the mass infantry itself. The mass infantry is all the rest of the foot-soldiers. They may move forward on foot. They may move forward in motor lorries. They may move forward by train, but they are essentially mass infantry in that they are organized into squads, into companies, into regiments, into brigades and divisions in the old-style manner.

The fifth factor of a blitzkrieg is a unified command for all fighting forces. This means that the infantry, the air force, and the artillery, machine gun units, and the commissary and supply units are all under a single unified command which is capable of giving final orders to all of them at the same time. This condition exists in the German army as it exists in the Russian army. It did not exist in the French army, it does not exist in the English army, and to the chagrin of a good many American military analysts it does not exist in the American army.

Such is the constitution of the land army whose function is to blitzkrieg its foe. It is supplemented by the Luftwaffe or the air force.

THE FUNCTION OF AN AIR FORCE in modern war, is, first, immediately upon declaration of war, or even a few hours before, to attempt to immobilize the enemy's aircraft. Four hours before the declaration of war by Germany upon the Soviet Union, the German air force was in the air bombing Soviet airdromes. Their purpose was to immobilize, to ground, or destroy upon the ground as many of the Soviet planes as possible, thus to gain superiority in the air in the first hours of the war. The advantage of gaining superiority in the air in the first hours of the war will come out much more clearly under the discussion of tactics.

The second function of the air force in a modern war is to serve as long range, mobile, heavy artillery. This can best be explained by comparing the use of air artillery in the present war to the use of land artillery in the last war. In the last war, the line attack pro-

cedure was as follows: Heavy artillery was brought up and the ranges determined. Before the infantry attack occurred, the artillery laid down a barrage in front of the infantry. This barrage crept forward until it passed successfully the first line trenches, second line trenches, reserve trenches, and moved on back to shell the artillery positions of the enemy. As the barrage passed over the front trenches, the infantry went over the top and by means of hand grenades and bayonet charges attempted to take the opposing trenches. If the attack was successful and the trenches were occupied, three miles was the limit to which the infantry might move; first, because it was moving on foot and three miles is a long way to walk with 60 pounds of cartridges, hand grenades, gas masks, blankets, trench shovel, iron rations and other equipment on your back, and second, it was necessary to give time for the heavy artillery to unanchor itself and move up to new positions, because it now had to seek out new ranges.

Contrast with that, the airplane attack. A Stuka can deliver a larger bomb than a field piece, can deliver it on the spot, and can return to its base for more ammunition. The ammunition does not have to be transported up to the front line positions, but can be 50 miles back if necessary. Therefore, it is contributory to the speedy operation of a panzer division. This air artillery is directed, first, against tank concentrations as the spearhead of an opposing force. Second, against troop concentrations, and thirdly, against artillery embankments.

The third function of an air force in a modern war is to disrupt lines of communication—lines of communication by means of which new men, new material, ammunition, and food are coming up. In order to do this, it picks out river crossings, mountain defiles, or any narrow place where there is a natural concentration of the lines of communication. If these lines of communication can be disrupted, then perhaps an enemy force can be isolated and knocked off.

The fourth purpose of an air force in a modern war is to bomb the centers of production. It reaches back of the lines of communication and destroys food or ammunition at its source of supply. It bombs factories, ammunition dumps, oil refineries, and oil dumps.

THE LUFTWAFFE, or Nazi air force, has a fifth function which is not common to most other air forces. The extra function of the Luftwaffe is to bomb the enemy population in an attempt to destroy civilian morale. That this is not a function of the Soviet air force is due to the simple fact that the Soviet Union has laid down as a military and political principle that it will not fight a people but only an army over the heads of the people.

It defines the people back of the lines as its potential allies, not

its actual enemies. And it does not bomb its allies.

This gives us, then, in outline, the *material* used in the blitzkrieg. The panzer divisions, the mass infantry, the luftwaffe, all formed under a single command, comprise the modern land army. What, then, is the *tactic* by means of which this blitzkrieg is carried out?

THE TACTIC OF THE BLITZKRIEG

THE TACTIC OF THE BLITZKRIEG is determined by the factor of military "force"; and military "force" is usually defined in terms of fire power, qualified by position. Thus, if two opposing divisions have equal fire power, the one on the defensive is rated as some three times as strong as the one that assumes the offensive. But in modern warfare, the factor of mobility must be added.

The rate of advance in battle of ordinary mass infantry will not average over three miles per day. However, panzer divisions, operating against mass infantry can average about fifteen miles per day. In other words, mechanized troops have five times the striking power of ordinary troops.

Thus, if a mass infantry division has taken up defensive positions (factor of three) and a panzer division has assumed the offensive (factor of five), the balance of force, $5/3$, is in favor of the offensive. This, of course, reverses the older formula.

The conventional plan of attack called for advance along a horizontal line of infantry troops, tank support, and occupation by the advancing force. The superior mobility of mechanized troops, however, makes it possible to draw them up in a vertical column, thus concentrating their striking power at one particular point on the enemy lines. This again effectively multiplies the striking force; but, due to a number of imponderables, the factor of concentration seems to be incalculable.

The blitzkrieg depends, then, first, on the mechanized mobility of the panzer divisions; and, second, on their ability to concentrate fire power on a particular point. This accomplishes the "break-through."

The tactic was tried several times during the first World War (without modern mechanization and organization, it is true), but was deserted because material got isolated within the enemy lines and was destroyed. It wasn't until the last of the War 1914-18 that certain German line commanders invented a process which made possible the break through and follow up. This process is known as the "roll up."

Machine gun troops were stationed to the right and left of the point of attack. The job of these machine gun crews was to send a stream of lead over the top of the trenches so the men in th

trenches couldn't stick their heads up and see what was going on. Then, when the break-through occurred, the roll-up followed. Men, equipped with sacks full of hand grenades and trench shovels sharpened on one edge to razor sharpness, got into the enemy trench at the point of break-through and moved out in both directions, tossing hand grenades ahead of them.

The zig-zags of the trenches and the action of their own machine guns protected them from counter action. Thus a breach was made through which sustaining troops might be poured to occupy the territory gained by the fast moving attacking units.

The only trouble was, it came too late on the part of the Germans, and was only used with battalions and regiments, rather than with whole divisions or even army corps. The tactic however became an important invention with the development of the mechanized or panzer division.

THE ATTACK OF THE PANZER DIVISION follows this formula: First, the attack by the Stuka bombers. The purpose of the bomber attack is to silence the enemy artillery and to destroy his tank force. Then, the fog attack, which may occur or may not. If the terrain is favorable, the fog attack will be used. This fog attack is not thrown over your own troops, but is thrown over the enemy troops to get them confused. You know where you're going; they don't know where you're coming from. It is not used in all attacks.

The inevitable next step is the tank attack. The tanks move forward in front of the infantry, thus reversing the World War procedure and the procedure used by the French up to and including the present war. The tanks are used for the breakthrough because they are metal monsters with tremendous fire power and because they are hard to stop with anything but tanks. If you have then been able to immobilize even a part of your enemy tanks, you drive your own tanks forward. That accomplishes the break-through.

The break-through is then followed by the armored troops. The function of the armored troops, strangely enough, is to extract the tanks from difficulties into which they might fall. The tanks might come to a river. They might get tangled up in swampy terrain. It is the function of the armored troops to follow and protect them, to bring up engineers to untangle the tanks so they may again move forward. A tank can travel some 30 miles an hour; armored troops can travel something in the excess of that; this gives a tremendous ability to move forward.

The next is the use of motorized troops to roll up the pierced line far enough to form a breach for the mass infantry. The roll-up in general is not very great. It will depend on the size of the forces

involved, the terrain, and the nature of the defense used by the enemy.

THE FOLLOW-UP OF THE MASS INFANTRY occurs, then, as the final step. Here troops are used which are not so perfectly developed, not so mechanized, soldiers whose only job is to mop up and hold the positions occupied. These troops are grouped into the ordinary mass infantry companies and regiments and are well infiltrated with members of the Gestapo.

This is the tactic of the blitzkrieg in its break-through.

After the break-through, a central portion of the panzer units drives straight on toward some military or political objective. It may be Warsaw. It may be Paris. It may be Moscow, or it may be some fortification or some key communication center back of the line. Two other sections of the panzer units fan out on either side in two turning movements, get back of the immobilized lines of the enemy, disrupt his communications, and isolate his front line troops.

Thus with his general headquarters disrupted, his field headquarters isolated, his troops caught in pockets, the enemy has nothing to do but surrender.

There is also the technique of the double break-through. You may choose two points in the fortified line and break through on both instead of one. In this you have a superior advantage, because upon the basis of a double break-through you can utilize the tactic of the "pincer."

THE PINCER is merely the meeting of the two wings of two blitzkrieger. They meet and you have an "encirclement." However, a pincer encirclement is not the same as an "envelopment," German general headquarters' propaganda communiques to the contrary.

An envelopment is an old mass infantry technique. It is the purpose of the formula originated by Hannibal and developed by Napoleon. It is stated thus: attack; outflank; envelop; and destroy. It is a technique based upon the idea that two armies would meet in the open. These two armies in ordinary would consist of infantry flanked by cavalry. The infantry would make a holding attack. The strong cavalry wings would turn back the wings of the enemy, and reserve infantry forces, held in position for that purpose, would follow the cavalry. If the flanking movements were successful, the attacking forces would eventually meet in the enemy's rear and the envelopment would be complete.

The pincer movement, properly known as "encirclement," is not an envelopment and is not capable of destroying an army, for the simple reason that it is too thin. Its purpose is to cut into pieces, to disrupt.

and to demoralize. It assumes as opposition a mass army rather than a mechanized army, and it leans heavily on the possibility of fifth column activity.

THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST FRANCE, it can be seen, was carried out in detail along the lines outlined. In working against the mass army of the French and against the fortified position of the Maginot Line, the Nazis accomplished a double break-through and encirclement by pincers. The demoralization of the French staff and the French fifth column accomplished the rest. A nice formula, and it worked.

THE POLISH CAMPAIGN was a different matter. Poland is a broad flat plain and the Poles were fighting with mass troops without fortifications.

The Polish campaign was won by means of something between 100,000 and 125,000 mechanized troops opposed to a million and a half mass troops. It worked according to the following formula: The Poles had their army ranged in the usual formation—best troops in front, secondary troops next, reserve lines and communications lines running back of that. The Polish idea was to meet the enemy with their best troops and fight it out at point of contact. The Germans didn't plan that way. The first thing they did was to immobilize the Polish air force. Then they drove at the Polish army with panzer divisions, breaking through at four to five different points. This accomplished the complete disruption of the Polish forces.

Their air force had been grounded and the Poles had no means of quick communication. They didn't know where the Germans were. Driving through the Poles and turning to the rear, the German panzer division were always in contact with the inferior troops. They won the war back of the lines. The flower of the Polish army was immobilized at the front and never had anything to fight.

IN THE PRESENT ATTACK ON THE SOVIET UNION, the German high command has based its tactics very largely upon the success it had in Poland, supplemented by what it learned in France. Since Hitler took over the issuing of propaganda bulletins, he has successively claimed as triumphs for the Nazis each one of the things that had been accomplished in Poland. In the first week of the war, he claimed to have immobilized the Soviet air force, destroying some 7,407 planes. His second claim was the destruction of the Red army. The real truth of the matter is that his fast moving panzer divisions got entangled in the deep defense zone at the Soviet borders, were isolated, and destroyed. Five of the eight mechanized divisions making the initial attack were lost in this manner.

That, then is the strategy of the blitzkrieg, the way it operates, and

the way it has won its battles—the battles in Poland, in France, the battles of Belgium, Norway, Denmark, and the Balkans.

We come now to the question of how to defend oneself against a blitzkrieg—this thing which has been so successful, which for a year and a half has torn the peoples of Europe into shreds. What can you do about it? How are you going to oppose it?

THE MECHANIZED ANSWER

THE FIRST ANSWER TO THE BLITZKRIEG is that you are certainly not going to oppose it in any of the old ways. On the contrary, you've got to oppose it with the identical type of organization and materials which it uses. You've got to have mechanized panzer divisions, men with high morale and long training, to deal with the blitzkrieg. And that was the first thing which the Soviet Union did. In fact the Soviet was the real author of the blitzkrieg. Back in 1928, they began to mechanize their troops and to build up a large tank park. It became clear already by 1930 that the Soviets were building panzer divisions. They didn't have to wait to see Hitler's successes in France or Holland. They had this figured out and were building a mechanized army years ahead of anybody else.

THE MECHANIZED STRENGTH OF THE SOVIET ARMY, by a conservative estimate, consists of some 60 brigades of panzer troops. Why brigades? The old division in the mass army ran from 17,000 to 19,000 men. With mechanization, it was found that that was too many men and finally Germany cut down to 15,000 and then to 12,000. The Soviets, instead of cutting down the number of men in a division, reorganized the brigade system and made their brigades into groups of 6,000 or 7,000 men each. In the Soviet mechanized army, each brigade is a miniature panzer division, having attached to it almost all the components of a regular division. Thus, a brigade in the Soviet division is not specialized to the extent that it is in the divisions of other armies. By making their brigades semi-autonomous they left their divisions at 17,000 to 18,000 men. These, according to the Soviets, have a certain strategic value. Such divisions have a tremendous defense power.

The man power of the Soviet's 60 brigades would amount to about 400,000 mechanized troops at the very least. Various estimates are given of the mechanized strength of the Nazi army, but it probably does not exceed 16 divisions. Give them 200,000 men and they still have only half the mechanized army of the Soviet Union.

A COMPARISON OF THE MILITARY FORCES of the Soviet Union with that of Germany would run along this line:

Mechanization of the Soviet divisions is superior to that of the Germans. They have more machine guns, more tanks, more bombers

per man than the German divisions. According to some military strategists, that makes for inferior mobility. Certainly it makes for a superior defense power.

The air force of the Soviet divisions is superior in bombing power to the German divisions because of more and heavier airplanes. The ability of the fighter planes to out-fight and out-maneuver is said to be inferior to that of the German planes.

The tank force of the Soviet divisions is not only superior to the German divisions in power; it is superior in the number of heavy tanks. Many military strategists say that this makes for immobility. Certainly it makes for a superior defense position and it is always to be remembered that the Soviet Union has to figure upon a defensive fight before it can take the offense.

The firing power of the Soviet divisions, because of their superior mechanization, is greater than that of the German divisions. The morale of the Soviet mechanized divisions is at least equal to that of the German panzer divisions. Whether it is superior or not will show in actual combat situations.

Mobility is questionable. We'll have to wait and see. Generally, the military authorities believe that the Soviet divisions are inferior in mobility to the German. Organization and staff operation is usually considered to be inferior to the German. But that is very questionable.

Experience is certainly all on the side of the Germans. The Germans have had a year and a half of experience and there is no substitute for this, except possibly political enlightenment. Communication is best on the side of the Soviets for the simple reason that the Soviet lines are shortening, while the German lines are lengthening over unfamiliar territory. Contrary to the reports, the Soviet Union has a very good railroad system and the Germans do not. As far as momentum is concerned, (and it is a tremendously important thing), the Germans are in a vastly superior position. They made the attack and their blitzkrieg, once moving, has a momentum which can't be underestimated.

To get the total situation, it must be remembered that the Soviet Union has a trained army of seven million men, as against a top of five million on the part of Germany—that this mass army back of the Soviet panzer divisions is politically developed and dependable. The mass infantry of the German army is not dependable.

Germany has no reserves. Even though the peoples under his domination have military training, it is almost impossible to get them to the front. The Soviet Union has a trained reserve man power of 17 millions. Further, practically the entire man power of

the Soviet Union is armed. If the war should ever break into the back country, the German troops would meet a completely armed population. That situation does not exist in Germany, because Nazis, being Nazis, have been forced to take arms away from the people—a vast difference.

Two hundred million people are organized back of the Soviet army, and Germany has to use an appreciable amount of her military as police power over the occupied countries of Europe.

As for production, in 1938, the Soviet Union took first place in the production of heavy industrial goods in Europe, and since that time has been the second largest producing unit in the entire world.

This, then, is the first answer to the blitzkrieg. It is an army mechanized and organized along similar lines and which deserts all the old principles of warfare. It opposes machines to machines; not men to machines. But this is only half of the story.

The second half of the story involves the question of positional defense. If you're on the defensive, what sort of position are you going to take. Are you going to build yourself a Maginot Line? Are you going to build yourself a West Wall? Are you going to build a Mannerheim line? Or, are you going to fight in the wheat fields like the Poles did? None of these worked. So, evidently you're not going to do those things. What are you going to do? The Mannerheim line was strong but it was a narrow line. It was broken through at one point and immobilized. The West Wall was never more than 30 or 40 miles deep. A panzer division, moving on a break-through rate of 15 miles a day, could pierce the West Wall in two days, pierce the Maginot Line in one day.

THE DEFENSE ZONE ANSWER

THE SECOND ANSWER TO THE BLITZKRIEG, then, is a "depth defense zone"—not a line, not underground fortifications, not a wall, but a zone of fortifications in tremendous depth. The purpose of this zone of fortifications of tremendous depth is to oppose the panzer divisions, not with a solid obstacle which might be pierced, but with a resilient force which can give backward and absorb the momentum of the blitzkrieg itself. A sort of feather pillow or fish net—something soft, absorbent.

In 1932, the Soviets started their depth defense zone, miscalled the "Stalin line." This "line" is 100 to 150 miles in depth. Not five, ten, not thirty, but 100 to 150 miles in places. Assuming that the Germans could make fifteen miles a day against fortifications, it would take them ten days to pierce the line. But if they are being contested by mechanized panzer units and tanks and anti-tank guns,

that rate may be slowed down to half. That means twenty days. The logic is to destroy momentum, wear down the division and then destroy it. In twenty days of fighting, a panzer division is going to lose a certain percentage of its men and material every day. If it is held up enough days, there will be no division left.

THE STALIN "LINE" itself might very well have held the German blitzkrieg because of its organization; but the Soviets acquired in 1939 and 1940 another and lighter defense zone, equal in width to the Stalin line, and in front of it—one hundred and fifty miles of territory in Poland, in Bessarabia and the Baltic countries, in front of their already organized depth zones. This made some three hundred miles of territory through which a panzer division had to plow before it could accomplish its break-through. 300 miles, allowing ten miles a day against mechanized forces, gives thirty days for a break-through. And in 30 days, there is nothing left to break through with. Not, certainly, the original force. The original force will have become completely destroyed merely by reason of the usual percentage of the casualties per day in an attack. This is, then, the logic of the depth defense zone.

A FEW THINGS ABOUT A DEPTH DEFENSE ZONE. What is it? What does it consist of? It, especially the light defense zone, consists of all sorts of irritating things. It consists of a little group of trees on a hill which harbors a machine gun nest. This nest covers a defile and raises havoc with the oncoming panzer divisions for a half day. And at the end of a half a day, the men disappear and become snipers on their own. Or maybe it's a group of anti-aircraft guns used as artillery. Or, it's a tank corps which contests the opposing tanks. Maybe it's a trench at an important junction, well-manned with machine guns and the attackers have got to stop and take it. The fight goes on all day. Night falls and the next morning there's nobody there. Meanwhile a day has been spent trying to crush something that the next day wasn't there. Completely irritating encounters all the way.

When the attack comes to the major depth defense zone, then it comes up against even more terrible things. There are underground forts. There are whole mechanized divisions, strategically placed. It may take days or weeks to deal with them, and the attack can't stop because it will lose its momentum. There are all sorts of minor fortified positions, but no position so important that it can't be abandoned. No position so important that the defense has to stake everything on holding it. This goes on day after day, until the attacking panzer divisions have nothing left of them, simply through loss of momentum and through attrition.

The result has been this: First, it took the Germans two weeks to pierce the Soviet light defense zone. That was a tremendous slowing-up. Since then, they have battered themselves against the depth defense zones of the Stalin "line." This has given the Soviets time to mobilize. (It takes about ten days thoroughly to mobilize a modern army.) This is the logic the structure and the strategy of the depth defense zone of the Soviet Union.

WHAT IS ITS TACTICAL PROCEDURE? How does it work? It works in this way. First, it opposes the blitzkrieg itself not by permanent positions, which are dangerous if lost, but by mobile mechanized units of the same type as those that are attacking. In other words, tanks meet tanks backed up by armored troops, and those backed up by motorized troops.

However, the important point is the utilization of the fact that the blitzkrieg moves into the defense zone in a long line, and that there are no positions which can be rolled up, but positions which can simply be left. The blitzkrieg, then, is forced to move forward on a vertical line. That leaves it with several weak joints in its skeleton.

The first weak joint is between the proceeding tanks and the armored troops which follow it. The tanks are useless without the troops and the engineers. If you can, by a sortie or by a flank attack, drive a wedge between the tanks and the armored troops, you have immobilized the tanks. The tanks are no good without the rest of the panzer division, and the panzer division itself is no good without the tanks.

The most important juncture, however, is back of the panzer division itself, between the mechanized forces and the occupying mass infantry. Say that a division has advanced into Soviet territory some distance and night has come. A large tank burns a tremendous amount of gas. In fact, it burns all the gas it carries in less than a day. The light tanks also burn up a tremendous amount and most have to be refilled during the night. So, night comes and the tanks are to be refilled. But out of one of the molehill forts which has been passed up comes a mere battalion of Red soldiers. They're not going to win any battles, but they are going to hold up the gas supply for the tanks. They are going to fight all night. They're going to keep the gas supply from moving up. Comes the dawn. There's the gas. Here—the tanks. The tanks are absolutely useless without gas. They can't even run their turrets. Such immobilized tank corps are an easy target for airplanes, artillery, or even infantry troops.

THE PROBLEM OF GAS deserves, parenthetically, a few words. It takes somewhere between 500,000 and 600,000 barrels of gas per

day to run a blitzkrieg. That is over 20,000,000 gallons of gas per day, and that gas has to move up and move up fast. The onslaught of various forces of a blitzkrieg is terrific. The bombing planes consume 200 gallons of gas an hour. The fighter planes, 100 gallons of gas an hour. To the best available figures, twenty million gallons of gas per day for two weeks is exactly 1/6 of a year's production and importation by the German Reich. By those figures, and if, mind you, if Germany had a year's supply of gas on hand two weeks ago, by those figures, she had enough gas left to fight exactly 10 more weeks. However, it is impossible to estimate accurately the German reserves.

This constitutes, then, the strategy of the depth defense zone: First, its structure; then its tactics—the way it works against a blitzkrieg, slows it up, destroys it.

There is one further tactic to be analyzed. It is based upon the logic of the "reserve." The Soviet Union, having a tremendous man power, and having a superior mechanized force, can utilize the following tactic. It can plant a percentage of its mass army on the defense zone, then, the rest of its mass army and remainder of its mechanized force back of its defense zone. The *reserve army* is not an inferior body of troops (as the term reservist is commonly used) but is made up of men and materiel of same quality as those at the actual front. What is the function of the mechanized troops and the mass of infantry which the Soviet Union is holding in reserve?

THE COUNTER-BLITZ

THE FIRST FUNCTION OF THE SOVIET RESERVE is to handle any break-through which might occur. Let us say that the Germans break through with three mechanized divisions, followed by a mass army of one million men. What happens? They have fought all the way from Berlin to Smolensk, made their break-through, and when they break through they meet a superior force of the best mechanized troops in the world, all fresh and ready to fight. Nice! If the Soviets have been able to reserve such a mechanized force and such a reserve army, the Germans might make one or two or three break-throughs, and still they would be as badly off as they were before, because they would be meeting fresh troops, completely equipped with everything a panzer division ought to have. So, from a military standpoint, it seems impossible for the Germans, considering the strength of their forces, to do anything but embroil themselves in this mass of Soviet defenses.

However, a blitzkrieg army stopped is apt to dig in, and when it digs in you've got a war of position which can last for one or two or three or four years. To turn men out of trenches with bayonets is

a difficult job and a long one. Therefore, the tactic of the counter-blitz, and the second function of the *reserve army*.

THE COUNTER-BLITZ is used at such time as the blitzkrieg force is worn down and immobilized. It is, however, first of all to be distinguished from the "counter-offensive." The counter-offensive was originally a mass infantry tactic. If the attacking force should lose momentum for any reason, the defenders might through reorganization or reinforcement, themselves assume the offensive and drive back the opposing force to or beyond its original positions. This might be done by attack on the nose, on the flanks, or both. The distinguishing characteristic of the counter-offensive, however, is that it deals directly with the attacking enemy force.

The counter-blitz, on the other hand, disregards the panzer divisions on the basis that they have been immobilized and at least partially outflanked. It does not require that they be destroyed. In fact, its primary logic is that it does not wait for this costly and time consuming process but initiates its own attack in a new area.

Using fresh mechanized troops from the "reserve army" and leaving the original defending divisions to keep the panzers occupied, the counter-blitz creates new fronts by driving through between or along side of the enemy infiltrations. Thus even though the enemy might have dug in, the war is still kept mobile. In fact, one of the purposes of the tactic of the counter-blitz is to avoid degeneration into a long drawn out war of position.

If the French, for example, in May of 1940, had been able successfully to contest the Germans in the air and if they had had available sufficient mechanized divisions, they might well have pinched off the Sedan-Somme-Abbeville salient by means of an attack aimed at its base. This would have freed the million or so French and British troops on the Belgian border for reorganization and attack along the old route which skirts the Ardennes. A determined counter-blitz here would have isolated the German salient in the Low Countries and would have avoided the fiasco at Dunkerque.

But the French had a mass army instead of a mechanized army, and they had neglected their airforce. Tactically, the French high command was still fighting the war of 1914-18; and politically it was much more frightened of the French masses than it was of Hitler's legions. In this later attitude, it had the full support of the industrialists and most of the politicians.

With the Sovient Union, the situation is exactly reversed. The Red Army is the most completely mechanized in the world and its entire personnel, from the central command down to the mass re-

servists, has had a thorough anti-Fascist education. The same is true of the civilian population. As for the industrialists, there aren't any.

A typical Soviet counter-blitz against the Germans might well take something like the following form: (1) Immobilization of the Kiev salient. (2) Immobilization of the Bessarabian salient. (3) Destruction of the oil refineries at Ploesti. (4) Counter-blitz with light tanks and mechanized cavalry from Ukrainian bases and along the line Zinoviesk-Cernauti, thence down the Siret (keeping the Carpathians as guard on the right flank) to the Danube and fanning out on the south Roumanian plain. Such a maneuver, always with the provision of course that circumstances permit it, would destroy the southern German arm and establish bases for control of the entire lower Balkans.

This, then, is the *strategy* of the counter-blitz. For *material* the counter-blitz uses exactly the same type of mechanized divisions as is used by the blitzkrieg itself. For *tactic*, it used the same formula: attack by bombers, break-through with tanks, support by armored troops, and follow-up by mass infantry. Its *logic* is the same—the break-through into the enemy's rear, isolation of the advanced troops, engagement of inferior troops, disruption of communication, occupation of key transportation and production centers, and contact with guerilla and partisan forces. In point of time, however, it takes place only after the main mechanized force of the enemy has been removed from effective action and his army reduced, in the main, to the status of mass infantry.

A summary of Soviet Strategy is now possible: (1) Attrition of the blitzkrieg through opposition to it of identical mechanized forces. (2) Immobilization of the blitzkrieg in the depth defense zone. (3) Counter action with mobile armored units which carries the war into the enemy's territory. It is a formula which has been in preparation for some fifteen years. It has back of it the 200 million people of the Soviet Union and the millions upon millions of anti-Fascist people throughout the world. It represents the first serious, unified, determined opposition to Fascist world domination.

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